DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 500 SP 036 121

AUTHOR Middleton, Sue; May, Helen
TITLE Towards an Oral History of Educational Ideas in New Zealand as a Resource for Teacher Education.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Context Effect; *Educational History; Educational Policy; *Educational Research; *Educational Theories; Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Interviews; Oral History; Personal Narratives; Primary Sources; *Teacher Education; Teacher Influence; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Life History Method; New Zealand

ABSTRACT

This paper reports research on: the major educational ideas that have shaped New Zealand's educational policies and influenced the content and form of teacher training and early childhood education; the educational ideas that have influenced teachers and former teachers; and how teachers have reacted to the major changes that policymakers have implemented. Data were collected from a literature review and from 150 life-history interviews. The paper focuses on three retired teachers who have been prominent "progressive" educators. These case studies show how each teacher's theories build onto pre-existing educational, political, or social concerns or projects, indicating the importance of the time, form, and context in which educational ideas are encountered. This approach enables exploration of relationships between the educational theories in academic texts and policy documents and the ways individual teachers and others involved in education think and act in their everyday situations. The paper suggests that life-history approaches are assuming increasing popularity in educational research and in teacher education to help combine the everyday and the theoretical dimensions of experience. (Contains 38 references.) (ND)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 385 500

TOWARDS AN ORAL HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL IDEAS IN NEW ZEALAND AS A RESOURCE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION.

Sue Middleton (with Helen May)[1]
School of Education
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton

Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of AERA, April 18 - 22, San Francisco, 1995.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S Middleton
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[1] My co-researcher and colleague, Helen May, is overseas on sabbatical leave for a semester. Although the introductory sections of this paper were condensed from an earlier paper which was written in collaboration with Helen before her departure (Middleton and May, 1994), she has not seen the raw data used in this one, which came from three of my own interviews, or participated in its analysis.

SP036121

Hannah Bell is a 77 year-old retired secondary school teacher. Like many secondary school teachers of her generation, she began teaching straight after completing her BA without having done a teachers' college year[2]. Her only exposure to formal educational theory before she started teaching had been one 'unit' at university - Education I: [3]

Hannah: Oh, I did Education I, I think.

Sue (Researcher): Do you remember much about that?

Hannah: I remember there was somebody who was high up in the Education Department who had twins - two nice girls. And they both came out with the same IQ after we had all been tested. That's about all I can remember.

Sue: So you did stuff on testing and things like that?

Hannah: Yes, which I didn't like, so I didn't want any more of that.

Sue: Why didn't you like it?

Hannah: I like real people. I don't like adding and subtracting.

Hannah's encounter with formal educational theory at university in the 1930s, then, was as a disembodied abstraction. For many years I had known of Hannah as a teacher with a clearly articulated student-centred pedagogy. In the early to mid 1970s she had developed an approach to English teaching which was centred on students' own questions. In this, her philosophy and practice were in tune with a wider educational movement at the time which is sometimes known as 'neo-progressivism' - a movement centred in a belief that education must be a route to human freedom and that this end can best be furthered with pedagogies which build upon children's own inquiries. These ideas, of course, were not new - the New Zealand educational terrain, like that of the United States, has been buffetted by the winds of Progressivism at various times in its history. Although New Zealand Progressivism's[4] influence has no

---

2 Then, as today, the usual route to secondary teaching was via one year at a teachers' college after completing a university degree in one or more 'teaching subjects.'

3 Education was taught as a university subject within liberal arts faculties and students could major in Education in a BA degree (Moss, 1990; Middleton, 1990). It was common for aspiring teachers such as Hannah to include at least one unit of Education in their degrees. A unit consisted of two or three papers (courses) and there were 9 units in a BA.

4 I use the term 'Progressivism' as meaning that broad grouping of educational theories which view education as a route to self-determination in students and towards a society which is grounded in democratic principles. Progressive educators see pedagogies which make space for students' own initiatives, questions and projects as best fostering those ends. The theoretical influences on progressivism are diverse, but are commonly traced to the philosophy of John Dewey and the research of psychoanalytic (e.g. Susan Isaacs) and developmental (e.g. Piaget) psychologists. I use the term 'neo-progressivism' to refer to the versions of student-centred learning which

doubt been strongest in early childhood and infant education (Beeby, 1992; May, 1992; G. Somerset, 1988), there have been times when its influence in secondary schooling has been strong enough to shape the aims and methods of national policy documents and curricula. The Form 1-4 English and Social Studies syllabi which were developed and introduced during the 1970s amidst great controversy are examples. How did a teacher like Hannah, who remembered her formal exposure to educational theory at university in the 1930s only as "statistics and tests and stuff like that", come to develop her distinctive student-centred pedagogy in the late 1960s and to become an enthusiastic participant in the development and trialling of the new English syllabus at that time?

As teacher-educators, my co-researcher (Helen May) and I want to introduce our students to educational theories as teachers experience, choose, and live them in the everyday settings in which they work. Student teachers often experience and describe a gap between theory and practice in their courses and a main objective of our present research is to develop teaching resources which can help to close this gap by offering them examples of 'theories-in-action' in the everyday educational world. In this we hope to model the ways in which New Zealand education professionals from different times, age-groups, cultural backgrounds, geographical locations and socio-economic strata have - within the possibilities and constraints of their circumstances - selected from the ideas available to them as a basis for constructing their own educational theories. Such exemplars should help student teachers to deconstruct the educational and other possibilities of their own lives and to view themselves as active and creative educational theorists, who will not merely mimic what has gone before, but create new amalgams of the theories and concepts which they encounter in the course of their professional lives to create pedagogies and educational strategies which are their own.

In order to incorporate the variety and dynamics of past and present New Zealand teachers' 'lived' educational theories, or discourses (Foucault, 1980; Walkerdine, 1984) in our teaching, both of us have for many years been using life-

---

became popular during the late 1960s to mid-1970s. This was influenced by a diversity of social theories, movements and practices such as de-schooling (Illich, 1971); open classrooms and free schools (Holt, 1974; Kohl, 1969; Postman and Weingartner, 1973) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1971). Neo-progressivism can be seen as a popularised pedagogical adjunct of the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s which encompassed movements for liberation by minority groups within the west (e.g. Black civil rights in the US; feminism; student, hippy, anti-Vietnam War and other youth movements) and de-colonisation movements in former colonies. These movements questioned the assumptions behind the post World War Two educational ideal of 'equal opportunities' as resting on the provision of identical educational opportunities for all individuals. Notions of pluralism challenged hegemonic conceptualisations of individualism. The academic arm of these movements is found in critical and feminist theories in the social sciences.

history interviews - in both their academically theorised (e.g. May, 1992a; Middleton, 1993) and their raw data forms - as content in our educational theory courses. In addition, in certain courses, both of us require students to do some educational and/or childrearing life-history interviewing of their own as a means of gathering data about educators' past and present lived educational theories, and about how educational policy discourses at various times and in various institutional and geographical locations have created possibilities and constraints in the lives of both those who are doing the teaching and those who are being taught. The structural and biographical disparities between students and teachers from various social class, cultural and gender groups are vivified in the process of collecting and historically contextualising such data. We are presently engaged in researching and writing a textbook which will introduce our student teachers to such lived educational theories. We are in the process of interviewing 150 teachers and former teachers[5] and, to date, have completed over 100 of the interviews. Our research questions are as follows:

1. What are the major educational ideas which have shaped New Zealand's education policies in early childhood and schooling in the life-times of our interviewees?

2. What are the educational ideas which have influenced the content and form of teacher education and early childhood training over this period?

3. According to teachers and former teachers, what are the educational ideas which have influenced them in their work in early childhood centres and in schools?

4. Where did teachers get their ideas from?

5. How have teachers reacted to the major changes which policy-makers have implemented?

Our first two questions are characteristic of previous work in the history of educational ideas in New Zealand and can be addressed with the help of published writings, library searches, literature reviews, and analyses of key policy and curriculum texts. Previous studies have been centrally concerned with what influential educational theorists and policy-makers have said and written at particular times (e.g. Beeby, 1986; McLaren, 1973; Renwick, 1986; Shuker, 1987). The data for such studies have consisted mainly of official texts - records of parliamentary debates, government or departmental policy documents, school or other institutional records, etc. Similarly, studies of the educational theories which have been taught to teacher trainees have usually focussed on the content of the textbooks and journals which

---

[5] Our project uses the term 'teacher' to be inclusive of all adults who work in the care and education of children. In early childhood, however, not all adults involved in the education of young children define themselves as teachers. 'Supervisors' (playcentre) 'workers' (childcare) 'Kaiako' (kohanga reo), carers (family daycare) have, like the kindergarten or school teacher, a similar if distinctive role in the education of children. Our usage of the term 'teacher' acknowledges the breadth of this role.

were prescribed in university education papers or teachers' college courses or field based training programmes (Grey 1976; Somerset 1974; McGeorge, 1986; Middleton, 1990a; Moss, 1990b). There have also been autobiographical and biographical studies by and about the individuals who wrote such texts (Beeby, 1992; Carter, 1993; Somerset, 1988).

By concentrating on what educational policy-makers and teacher-educators were thinking and writing, such studies have constructed a 'view from the top.' They do not tell us about the educational ideas and practices of 'ordinary' teachers. A history of educational ideas which relies too heavily on policy documents and teacher-education texts can imply that teachers have passively absorbed what policy-makers and teacher-educators have told them. There is little in the academic literature about relationships between 'official' and 'grassroots' educational theories. Our focus in this project is on relationships between 'official' texts and the ideas of teachers and former teachers. The result will be an overview of New Zealand early-childhood and school education through teachers' eyes. We are particularly interested in the impact of 'progressive' (or child-centred) educational ideas on teachers and the ways in which teachers encountered and dealt with these ideas in their everyday practice (May, 1992b; Goodson, 1992; Walkerdine, 1984). We are interested in the ways such theoretical debates were 'lived' by teachers in the early childhood centres and schools.

Research questions 3, 4, and 5 are being addressed by means of 150 life-history interviews. The oldest people we have interviewed so far have been in their mid-nineties. Interviewees include teachers and former teachers of early childhood (kindergarten, playcentre, childcare, kohanga reo[6]) and school pupils (primary, intermediate, and secondary). Our methods of selection include 'snowball' techniques (in which one informant leads us to another) and the identification of key people through personal contact and reading (e.g. the members of syllabus writing groups). We try to cover the following with each person being interviewed:

- Their own childhoods and school experiences. We ask them whether or not they consider these to have been formative of their educational ideas as adults.

- Their reasons for choosing teaching/working with young children as a career.

- Their pre-service and field-based training. We ask them to tell us about the different lecturers and tutors they had and what they were taught.

- Their teaching experiences - how they taught, why they taught that way, any changes in their teaching and reasons for such changes, experiences of in-service training, career moves and changes and reasons for these. A useful way is to ask the

---

[6] Maori language total immersion pre-schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

interviewee to describe their classrooms, centres, kindergartens etc and to outline various 'typical' days at different times.

At the time of writing this paper (March 1995) over 100 interviews have been completed. About half of these have been transcribed[7]. This year (1995) we are completing the interviews, overseeing the transcribing of the remaining tapes, and beginning to compile a data base (probably using NUDIST software.[8]) This paper is my first - and tentative - exploration of some of our raw data. I have selected transcripts from interviews which I conducted with three retired teachers (two women and one man) who have been prominent 'progressive' educators. This paper focusses only on those segments from the interviews which outline, and account for, the beginnings of each informant's progressivism as s/he explained them to me.

CASE STUDIES: THREE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATORS.

You have already met Hannah Bell who was born in 1917, and became a secondary school teacher and Head of Department. Margaret Robertson was born in 1931. She too was a secondary school teacher and later a Principal. The names used for these two women are pseudonyms.[9] Jack Shallcrass is one of New Zealand's most well-known educators and has given permission for his real name to be used in this paper and in the project over all. He is well-known as a teacher-educator, university lecturer and broadcaster. He wrote a regular column about education in the popular magazine *The Listener*, and was outspoken as a leading member, and former president, of the Council for Civil Liberties. Jack was was born in 1922, started work as a junior high school teacher, then moved into teacher education. All three have achieved widespread professional reputations as educational innovators and each was mentioned to me by other interviewees in our study as an example of a student-centred or progressive educator.

Childhood and adolescence:

Margaret's educational ethos was characterised by her concern for 'the underprivileged' - a theme which she traced back to the sense of injustice aroused in

---

[7] We are grateful to the University of Waikato Research Fund Committee for a grant to cover this and other expenses related to the project.

[8] NUDIST stands for Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising. It was developed and is marketed by QSR (Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty Ltd, Box 171, La Trobe University Post Office, Vic Australia 3083.).

[9] The pseudonym Hannah was chosen by the informant. The name Margaret was chosen by me as the informant had not contacted me about her preferred name before this paper was completed.

her by her mother's childhood experiences and the social philosophy she had derived from these:

> My mother lived with her grandmother until she was 11 and her grandmother died. At 11 she transferred to her natural mother's household as a servant. Her natural mother had actually married quite well, if you like that word, and so they had a bakery and a hotel. My mother had to work in the bakery and in the hotel and do chores in the family home as a servant. And she watched her half-sisters go to [a private girls' secondary school] and have education. At that stage I think, that gave her an abiding desire for all of us to be involved in education. ..

Margaret described her mother as "socially aware and socially conscious so social issues were often talked around the table and that meant that we had as children an exposure to a feeling towards those people who were disadvantaged." She described a tightly-knit community in which churches and Sunday schools played a big part. There were a number of children with handicaps and disabilities and " we were brought up I suppose to accept people with handicaps as part of our community." Both of her parents were self-educated and within the family "there was music and singing and books read." Margaret explained that this rich family environment, which was characterised by the "loving relationship" between her parents, had taught her "that informal education is as important, if not more, in a child's life than schooling, than formal education."

Like Margaret, Hannah identified formative influences on her educational philosophy and teaching style in her childhood family environment. The theme which she identified was confidence:

> I was a very cherished little girl with lots of great aunts and everything, so I'm sure I was never left with no-one to pat me and look after me and say, "Would you like a peppermint?" and all that, and no doubt that's why I'm so appallingly confident.

Like Margaret's, Hannah's father was "self-educated." When the family moved to a provincial town to further his career, Hannah (who had a socially ambitious mother) found herself "one of the privileged young women of [the town]. Snobs all over the place and as I got a bit older dancing and lovely parties, people even had ballrooms in their houses." Although her mother had tried to push her into becoming a debutante, Margaret had resisted:

> Well at 13 I'd already gone to adult dances and at 15 I went to a ball. So I said, "Mother, I know it's only because you want a photograph of me with that ostrich fan". And she looked guilty. So I found her a friend and she came out. I wasn't going to come out - I was out. Anyway, I spent all my time playing tennis.

Jack Shallcrass described his father as "scratching a precarious living as a salesman." However, although the family were not well-off financially, Jack was encouraged in his education. He was the eldest child and the only boy in a large family

and said that his parents regarded it as "right and proper for the boy" to get an education. His position in the family provided Jack with opportunities to develop skills which came in useful later on when he began work as an untrained primary teacher in a rural school - like Hannah and Margaret, his family environment provided him with what Bourdieu (1971) termed 'cultural capital':

> in the family I was an organiser and we were very strong on entertainment. If there were relations or visitors, especially Saturday or Sunday nights, we kids from a very early age would put on concerts for them Happily, my twin sisters could sing. They were very good - they used to sing with each other in harmony, even in their sleep! We would always find something for the two younger kids to do - be a soldier or hold up a broom handle. We used to make up plays.

All three informants described their primary schooling as formal, but benign. Jack described his life as a boy in one city primary school in the late 1920s as follows:

> Teaching, as far as I was concerned, was formal - within that formal structure relatively humane. I was strapped on occasions, but not when I was young - a bit later in the school and that was when, if you weren't strapped you were obviously a sissy, so you actually sought it and made it virtually impossible for the teacher concerned not to hit you.... the Headmaster of the school was a sweet and gentle man who obviously did it with great reluctance. You could tell from the look on his face, but he knew the games that the kids were playing.

This regime - a benign dictatorship - had much in common with the primary school in a different city which was attended by Margaret nearly a decade later:

> I can remember it only as a very rigid classroom experience. We had milk at morning break and we had to put our hands on our heads and those kinds of things. Little rules. Our greatest understanding that we would take away would be learning how to live by little rules... The Principal was a humane person who we felt comfortable with. He was a person who was always around the school, and in the playground, that kind of thing. And we were conscious of his benevolence but we were also conscious of his authority.

All three of these respondents had attended single-sex state[10] secondary schools. Jack, who had been at a city boys' high school from 1936 - 1940, had found, with one exception, the teaching uninspiring. However, his involvement in extracurricular activities had given him confidence and helped him to develop leadership qualities:

> I was good at sport and so the school suited me. I was in the A stream but undistinguished as a scholar. But I was very successful at sport. I represented the school in pretty well everything. I was in the cricket eleven in my first year at Wellington College and I played that for four years. I was in the rugby team, tennis team, athletic champion, a boxing champion. Did all the right things.

---

[10] In New Zealand the term 'state school' means a government funded school. The term 'public school', which is commonly used in the USA is not used in this way in NZ because it could be confused with the English 'public school' (which in NZ parlance is a 'private school.')

> Very, very traditional and fitted into that pattern. I debated for the College[11] for two years. That was a civilising influence because, rather than merely being a knowledge recipient, I was forced to think about issues and then having to be on a platform in front of large audiences defending them. I think the school was quite good of its kind. Looking back on it I'm not sure that it made any real educational impact on me and it certainly didn't capture my mind. Occasionally good teachers did. There was a man called MacAloon who took English in the fifth form for our matriculation year and he brought Shakespeare to life for me. I can't remember any other teacher who made a significant impact at all.

Like Jack, Hannah (who had attended a girls' high school in a provincial town from 1929 - 1933) had, in the contrext of a strict formality, developed confidence and leadership qualities which were later to influence her teaching:

> I got pushed into doing everything. I was told I had to get a scholarship so I wasn't allowed to be Head of House... And we had a head prefect who had been in the Sixth Form for four years. Her mother got ill, so guess who had to be the head prefect and toll the bell and leave my Latin proses in the middle to go and toll the bell - it was miles away... And then she was also Games Secretary, so I had to do that... What I'm trying to make you realise is that I did everything. Because I already wanted to do drama, and so I was Drama Secretary... . And I made the costumes and I organised the stage management... I think it was much more formal than I realised. I came top in Latin and French and English and History.

In contrast, Margaret characterised her time at a city girls' school from 1945 - 1948 as an overwhelmingly negative experience. This was later to be strongly formative of her philosophy of teaching in that as a teacher she set out to subvert, overturn or reverse the kinds of teaching that she herself had experienced as a high school student: "I would just say that I modelled my own future attitudes towards young people patterning everything that I had experienced to get the opposite effect." She described her secondary schooling as repressive:

> My experience at [City] Girls' High School was not good. ... We were rigidly streamed. I can remember the way in which Latin was taught and it was brutal. I can remember very clearly a very good friend of mine whose Latin prose was put on the public notice board because it had so many marks - red marks - and that kind of thing... We were not really spoken to as human beings and I was very conscious of that. I was conscious of the fact too that the Principal... did not really know us at all and was a figure-head. The lessons were all in compartments, French and Latin and English and Science and so on. We had to take Latin and French because we were in the top academic stream and we didn't get to understand or know anybody in the commercial stream. So I always felt that to be unfair and longed, I think, to understand or to get to know others. We sang, we had a choir, and we had a good teacher for music, but we had no extracurricular activity apart from life-saving and the tennis team and basketball. So a few of us who were really keen on drama came together and we produced MacBeth and the whole of the play and we learned all the lines and we had a full cast and we costumed it and we got somebody from outside to teach us how to do make-up and we were really proud of it. We asked that we could put it on for our parents and it was denied us. We were allowed to put it on for some of the school. So you can see how I felt - that informal education (that is the contact that teachers have when they take drama, when they create an atmosphere

---

[11] In some New Zealand towns and cities the term 'college' is used for 'high school.'

> greater than the classroom in the school) - I think that that possibly was as a result of the kind of things that happened to us at that school. We were not praised ever. It was as though we were a bother and it was totally academic. I can't remember a married woman actually in the horizon and so I think that feelings and emotional responses were denied us through our education as well.

Teacher education:

All three had taken it for granted throughout their schooling that teaching would be their career. Margaret said that she had "always wanted to teach. I can't remember at any time thinking otherwise. " Hannah saw the then dominant expectations for her gender as contributing to her decision to become a teacher: "I expected to have a career, but very unthinking. When I say very unthinking, it was - you've read it all - women can choose this, this, or that." However, for her, teaching also had personal and intellectual appeal: "I liked kids and I liked ideas and I was quite happy to be a teacher. " Jack traced his desire to teach to a close identification with his first male primary school teacher:

> There was one teacher in Christchurch at St Alban's School who taught me in Standard 2 and 3[12] - his name was Teddy Snaucke - and it was from being in his class that I wanted to do teaching and I never had any doubts thereafter that that was what I wanted to be and I wanted to be a teacher like Teddy Snaucke. It was because of his personality. I don't think he was a great teacher looking back. In fact, I'm sure he wasn't, but he was a jolly fellow and with a very strong masculine appeal to boys. ... It was always clear to me that particular teachers can influence you - not necessarily by what they do, but also just simply by what they were.

Hannah and Jack had begun their teaching careers during the late 1930s as untrained teachers. Jack had started in a primary school. He explained that he had absorbed what he perceived to be the dominant attitude that a teacher was

> a good thing to be. Any moderately intelligent adult can be a teacher. You don't have to have any special training in education." On the same lines as "Well, she's a nice, warm, friendly woman - she'll do well in the infant school".

At this stage of his career, Jack taught as he had been taught. However, he had also begun to experiment with peer tutoring - students teaching one another (which was a technique that he was later to use with dramatic success with adult students):

> I decided I was going to leave school instead of going on to the 7th form. I don't know how I heard about the fact that you could go and teach in a small country school but someone suggested it to me so I went to the Education Board and they said "Well we just happen to have a school in Kaituna over in Marlborough - you're welcome to it. Would you like some help?" I said "I need a few days here to pack up and get things ready." They said "You can go off to Mount Cook School and just observe and talk to people there." So I went there and found out how to fill in registers and stuff like that. Then they popped me on a plane and at the

---

12 Standard is the New Zealand term for Grade.

ripe age of 18 I had six kids. I loved it and got on well with them and very shortly, before the end of the first term, those six had become twelve because kids came from other schools. I just loved them. It was great.

When asked how he had taught and why he had taught that way, Jack replied: "I behaved very much like Teddy Snaucke" - that is, he had taught as he had himself been taught. He had also been directed by the very structured Department of Education prescribed curriula of the time:

J: I had the Red Syllabus. I had a whole bunch of primers and I had kids up to Std 3. But I had the red syllabus and the red syllabus tells you exactly what to do.

S: Does it go lesson by lesson almost?'

J: No, topic by topic. I mean infant reading was just making use of the readers that were there.

S: What were they?

J: Beacon Readers. I used to read to them a lot. I managed to get children's books very cheaply from a bookseller in town. He was on the Education Board and let me have lots of kids books. I used to read to them and then get them to read to other kids. And we set time aside every day as a rule for reading. Just quiet reading to ourselves. By sheer accident or fluke I was doing something that was really rather good.

When he was old enough, Jack volunteered for military service in World War Two and served overseas. He was to attend Wellington Teachers' College and Victoria University upon his return. And it was there that his ideas about education and teaching were to be radically changed.

Hannah, however, was never to attend a teachers' training college. She had gone from secondary school straight to university where she was persuaded by the professor who handled her enrolment not to take her preferred subjects:

I went down [to university] to do history and English. I was interviewed by a man who was the professor of maths, that I'd never met. But when he saw my name he knew my father, and he said, "What subjects do you want to do?". And I said, "history and English". And I'm not making this up, his exact words were, "They're a glut on the market; you won't get a job". .. And I knew that I had to make money, because my father naturally would have done his best, but he didn't have a lot of money. There were too many good works and that sort of thing. So I thought - I looked at him - and I thought, "Oh, I won't be able to take history and English", and so he looked at my - I realise how malleable I was - he looked at my marks and he said, "You've done very well in Latin and French, why don't you do those?" So I said, "yes." Within five minutes. That's manipulation, isn't it?

An eye defect made study difficult and so Hannah "didn't swot properly in any way. I kept running dances and running the tennis and things like that. I never did much of any use except get a degree. " Although she "had to do Latin III and French III, Greek I, Greek History Art and Literature", she also did English I. After completing

her degree, Hannah returned to her provincial home town before her planned year at Teachers' College. However, she was not to get to the teachers' college because the Headmistress of the girls' high school she had attended telephoned and offered her a teaching job:

> [she] said, "Could you come and teach for a week or so because one of our staff is ill?" So I said, "Oh yes". (This was Friday). She said, "Come on Monday," and I was so arrogant or dim or ignorant or something, I didn't even ask what was I going to teach? I turned up on Monday. They gave me a gown - I rather liked that - and I strode into a room and started teaching history. So it must have been because I believed that it was teacher giving to children that I was so confident.

When asked where and how she had developed this confidence and skill, Hannah traced it to her own school days:

> When I was having to be head prefect [at the girls' high school] I used to stand on the stage while the whole 650 or however many all came in and stood in Houses. No-one was allowed to speak. They waited there and you'd hear the staff coming along the corridor. Well, I only had to look at them and nobody moved a muscle. I don't know why, but I knew I was very good at what's called 'control' in those days.

During the 1940s and 1950s Hannah taught in a private girls' school in a New Zealand city and in a girls' school in England. She was determined to move out of Latin and into English teaching

> Because kids asked questions. And if you were doing Latin for Oxford and Cambridge entrance, you had a syllabus. Do the Battle of Zama - all that sort of thing. What was the cause of the Punic War? What about the Maniples? How did they bring the elephants into it? You see. Every time kids asked a question I used to look around the class to see who wanted to take an interest. And most of them wanted to go straight on.

Her desire to change over from Latin to English was made possible by her taking up a position in England in 1950:

> that no self-respecting academic in England would have applied for because it was both Latin and English. You ought to be a specialist, you see. I wanted it of course because I wanted to change over to English. I'd already discovered that there were other things in the world besides Latin.

The dominant theme that emerges from Hannah's interview is her increasing focus on the students' own questions and on ways of encouraging them to make choices in what and how they were taught. Even in her most formal teaching days she

> took an interest in them and wanted to know what they thought. But I had no idea of what I was doing.....I had no idea about education. I just wanted to teach them. And they were kids and they asked questions and we got on. I just didn't think of theory. I must have thought of some, but I can't recall it, because I'd been through that year called Education I, but [it was] all statistics and tests and stuff like that.

In contrast, Margaret had been initiated into student-centred teaching from the time she had entered a teachers' college immediately after leaving secondary school. As a student teacher, she was encouraged to combine teachers' college and university study. This had provided Margaret with what she still feels to be an inspirational multi-disciplinary education at Dunedin Teachers' College and Otago University from 1948 -1952:

> College and university presented me with inspirational teaching... the marriage of Teachers College along with the university. I majored in philosophy and the philosophy Dept had outstanding teachers. Jack Passmore was the professor. It was a small department and a small area of the university. The personal contact that you had with the people who were teaching you inspired you to read and carry on and become really enthusiastic in the subject. We had an amazing professor of English called Professor Gregg, who had come for 5 years only from South Africa and he broke the whole of the large lectures down to small seminars. And we had probably about 15 to 20. We had, I think, one large lecture with two or three other people in the lecture room, but it was the inter-change between the people who were teaching us and who respected our ideas and who allowed us to develop these. I think that was where I began to understand what teaching was all about. The Teachers College at that time selected some students for what they called a third year, and I was selected to do a third year in university so I was able to carry right through philosophy to honours. And it was there - the exposure to people of ideas, the exposure to people who were thinkers, the exposure to people who were interested... I remember Professor Passmore going to see us in some of the plays and talking with us about Antigone from a philosophic point-of-view. There was a marriage too between the English department because Professor Gregg had been a philosopher and had written about Hume so for the first time I felt that there was some relationship between subjects and learning. I could see things. I could see Plato and the Platonic things in Wordsworth. That whole thing opened up. Liberated you really intellectually. And that's what learning is all about, I mean it's liberating people.

Margaret mentioned in her interview some of the 'big names' in New Zealand progressive education in the 1950s. Jean Ballard, who had taken her for drama, had been particularly influential. Although there was some teaching of formal education theories at the college, Margaret had been more affected by the examples of practical teaching she observed in schools and the ways these were discussed at the college:

> We had some theories of Education. I think that they didn't make any impression on me at all. Not at all. It was the way in which some of those subjects were presented to us. It was from going out to schools. I went to George Street Normal School as part of our practical work done at Teachers College and there were some wonderful teachers there at that time. And watching them and modelling yourself on them really and then going back to Teachers College and discussing with lecturers about ways of teaching - much better than the formal lectures that were given in isolation. [I saw that] organisation was important. That children were (little children, infants) able to explore and were able to discuss things so different from mine. Children's efforts were put up around the wall.

The impact of Progressivism in New Zealand education during the time of the First Labour Government (1935 - 1949) has been well documented (Beeby, 1986, 1992; Carter, 1993; May, 1992; Renwick, 1986). This period, when Dr C.E. Beeby was Director General of Education, was a time when government education policies, especially in primary

'schools, incorporated much of the ethos of 'developmental' (Walkerdine, 1984) or child-centred learning. The ideas of what has become known as the Beeby Era were controversial and dismissed by their detractors as 'playway.' All three of the progressive educators studied in this paper said that their educational ideas and practices were profoundly influenced by Beeby and others at this time. For example, at Dunedin Teachers' College from 1948 - 1952, Margaret was overtly made aware of, and became inspired by, the progressive educational thinking and practices which were being both discussed and practiced:

> The whole of the philosophy of opening the imagination of allowing people to create, of allowing the feeling of exposure to beauty. Now, these things had a tremendous impact on us all. We knew that we were in an exciting period in education and because it was so different from what I had experienced, and what I knew inside myself to be wrong and not to be education, it was schooling that I had experienced rather than being. It was simply that environment where we felt we responded to it. And, of course, the wonderful art at that time. Our third year Art, Jack Drawbridge, Ralph Hotere, and Jack Kim, they were all third years.[13] But it was alive. And in the middle of this we would put on plays, and we were able to put on the plays that we ourselves wanted. There was Ian MacIntosh too, an artist in Britain and has not ever come back ... taking, I think, the same philosophy through - that beauty is important. That exposure to minds and creative thinking were important. Those years where we wrote plays too and we put them on - our own plays, we created plays. It was alive.

Hannah (who had not attended a teachers' college) had encountered Beeby's ideas when she was teaching Latin in a private girls' school. She had come across the man and his ideas through the general publicity which was accorded them at the time and she recalled being impressed by Beeby's attitudes towards children as active creators of their own learning: "he just thought kids were important and kids ought to be nurtured properly and helped." She felt his stance created a climate which was supportive of her own growing focus on children's own questions as a desirable basis for curricula.

Like Margaret, Jack had attended Teachers' College at the zenith of the 'Beeby Era'. At the time Jack was a student there (1945 - 1947), Wellington Teachers' College was a centre of radical political and educational thought and Jack, who had just returned from his war-time military service overseas, was immersed in these ideas and inspired by some of his teachers and fellow students:

> Teachers College was great for me because there were a bunch of us my age, say early 20's up to mid-30's who had come back from the war and it was just a huge and rather splendid contrast from what we had been doing. We didn't want to talk about the war. We were all sick of that and here we were given opportunities of doing university study... I came into contact with some really important people in education. Walter Scott was a huge influence...He was lecturing in English in my second year. Anton Vogt, they were two of the big influences... In different ways. Vogt, who was an ideas person, and Scott, who was a classicist, highly

---

[13] These men were all to become eminent New Zealand artists.

disciplined. He became deeply influential politically because of his strong beliefs... He was a traditional liberal. He and J.C. Beaglehole founded the Council for Civil Liberties and I was one of the original members. When Scott finally died in the 1970s, I became President. He and I were a sort of continuity. I became his Vice-Principal at the College of Education and we worked very closely together in that respect. But it was his strongly disciplined mind which was so influential and interesting . He started a Great Books course at the College and ran that... He tended to do things like The Odyssey in the Iliad and then to a number of the late medieval French writers.

At Teachers' College, and later in his first school, Jack became aware the 'the authorities' were intolerant of what were perceived as being 'left-wing' opinions - in the arts or in intellectual or political debates. For example, the Wellington Education Board "forbade [Scott's] production of *Waiting for Lefty*, but he went ahead." Such attempts at censorship had failed to quench the enthusiasm of Wellingtonians for the plays and ideas:

> The queues ran from the College Hall, which was in Kowhai Road, right round Upland Road to the shops, because the city was starved of that sort of play. The only theatre in town that was doing anything like that was Unity Theatre and that was only in the late thirties. Victoria University wasn't. The things that Scott was doing were real trail-blazing things and this was frequently acknowledged by the University.

Jack's other mentor, Anton Vogt,

> was a Norwegian - large, flamboyant, a moderately good poet, but influential on other poets. He was very influential on James K Baxter for instance.[14] James was a student at the College in the early fifties. Vogt was influential but wrote reasonably good poetry himself. He was extremely good at encouraging poets to write and then to publish and he was influential on publishers in getting them to take up poets. But it was his teaching. He was a stunning teacher. And he was a good thinker. He wrote a very good book on the teaching of English which I still see around - small, concise very much to the point, profoundly thoughtful and it influenced a whole generation of English teachers. He was a powerful fellow, Tony, and enormous fun. Irreverent, no respecter of persons. He was a good sort of model to have around amongst young people because of his boundless enthusiasm and his capacity to excite them. He would come bouncing into a room with an armful of books and say "I've got some real treasures" and his influence was such that people believed him. He would just grab a book at random and read a little bit out of it and say, "Anyone interested?" and before the end of the time everything was gone. The next time you met people were bursting to share them; so that he was an enthuser, a brilliant educationalist.

Wellington Teachers' College provided Jack with a model of intellectual freedom - a model which he was later to attempt to re-create in his own teaching. He described the atmosphere and politics of Wellington Teachers College as "very supportive" of Beeby's ideas and of the whole ethos of Progressivism:

---

14 James K. Baxter was a well-known New Zealand poet. In the 1960s started a commune up the Wanganui River and became a champion of troubled youth. He was in continual conflict with conservative social groups, individuals and politicians.

When it re-opened after the depression, with Frank Lopdell as the Principal, and Frank Lopdell was one of the thinkers and influencers of his age. Funny, shy, modest man but extremely quick thinker and a capacity to collect people like Scott around him. The College got a name in the thirties, as being a dangerously radical hot-bed and that was sustained right through to the end of the sixties. You would hear things like people saying "I didn't ever believe I would hear such things discussed", because nothing was sacrosanct - it was an open intellectual atmosphere. And Scott, being deeply influenced by John Stuart Mill (so was Waghorn who was the Principal ahead of Scott) and by the thinking which believed that the safest thing was to allow all ideas out because that was the only way you would know that those which survived had survived on merit and not because others had been suppressed. It was an institution away ahead of its time in that. We used to get a regular stream of overseas visitors, who came just to be in the place and that was another piece of yeast fermenting, because you had people coming there because they had heard something and they wanted to see it and then they decided to stay and then actually want to teach in the place. Not necessarily being paid for it. So you did have this kind of regular ferment and other places seemed very stuffy beside it.

Early teaching careers:

Although she had gone to teachers' college with the intention of becoming a primary school teacher, Margaret had chosen secondary school teaching instead. A leading woman progressive educator on the staff at the teachers' college had encouraged her application for a new girls' secondary school which was being established. This period, the 1950s, was seeing a renewed enthusiasm amongst policy-makers for single sex secondary schools. This was fuelled by the 'moral panics' over what was termed 'juvenile delinquency' in the post-war era (Shuker, 1987). (As will be discussed below, Hannah was also to teach in one of these new girls' schools at this time). The school in which Margaret began her teaching career was in a large urban state housing area. This stimulated the principal (whom Margaret described as 'a socialist') to develop a philosophy which was designed to reverse the cycle of educational and socioeconomic disadvantage which was being experienced by so many of the school's students and their families:

> we had some very deprived families and we were taught through [the principal] that the greatest pleasure really and the greatest fulfilment we could get was to get a girl from a disadvantaged background right through the school to achieve. And we had a pastoral role to play. We were taught that you don't teach subjects, you teach the students first. Everything was to be students. You don't teach subjects to students, you teach the students the subjects. So she encouraged any kind of experimentation.

Such an atmosphere was conducive to Margaret's development of schemes of her own:

> One very important thing I did when I was a young teacher there, was thinking of trying to break the cycle of inter-generational poverty and it used to worry us when our girls became pregnant. I actually went to [a local primary school] and took some of the senior girls from our high school along and the Headmaster there selected children - we used to call them the 'latch-key children', that is the children who are locked out from the house and children who were deprived in any kind of affection really and in coming home to a home - and that was a wonderful experiment because the girls and I would work out all the creative

> things that we would do for these kids. A bus company put free buses on for us, because we discovered that these kids had not been to feed ducks, that their experiences were limited so that their language development was limited and so they became aggressive because of that. And we did this for I would say about four or five years. It was wonderful for our girls. We went after school and we did drama with them and role plays with them and so on and it was teaching our girls too about working with young people to enhance their language development and give them activities which would let them build and create and experience. All of that, of course, was part of the Beeby environment...

Like Margaret's, Jack's first teaching job (from 1945 to 1953) was in a school in which teachers and students were free to learn about, express, and experiment with dissenting or radical ideas In his case it was in a boys' school, Rongotai College, which was unusual in that it included Forms 1 and 2 students[15]. Jack and his colleagues encouraged the boys and their parents to learn about, engage with and debate contentious local and international political issues. Once again Jack came into conflict with the repressive apparatus of the state. Like Wellington Teachers' College, Rongotai College in the late 1940s - early 1950s

- was regarded as a hot-bed of radicals. It was frequently under the gaze of the Special Branch and the SIS who actually had visited the school... We were organising petitions against the Japanese peace treaty and the Police Offences Amendment Act and we had public meetings about them. All perfectly democratic practices. But to be a dissenter was to be subversive.

After several years of teaching, Jack decided that he needed to read more about educational theory and research. Although he had adored his learning at Wellington Teachers' College, its "emphasis on the liberal arts" had not exposed him to the written literature which addressed the nature and goals of education itself:

> I just decided as a teacher I needed to know more about education. I realised that being a teacher was more than having a degree in things that you teach. That there was a world of education in its own right, and about what made people tick and I didn't know anything about that. And I didn't know anything about testing either.

He found a new mentor in the person of Crawford Somerset, who is well-known in New Zealand as a pioneer in Progressive educational thought (Carter, 1993; Somerset, 1938/1973). While teaching at Rongotai College, Jack studied Education as a part-time student at Victoria University in the department in which Somerset was Professor. It was not only Somerset's ideas, but also his family network, which were to influence and support Jack's increasingly student-centred approach to teaching:

> When I came home from the war I [had met Somerset] in Feilding at the Community Centre.. I was greatly impressed with him and thought then, "There's

---

[15] The usual pattern in New Zealand cities was for the form One and two students (11 and 12 year-olds) to attend an Intermediate (junior high) school and for secondary schools to begin with the third form.

more to this teaching game than I had really believed". My degree, you see, had no education or philosophy until I got well on about 1950/51. I had to do Education I and Dip Ed[16] and that opened up all sorts of doors. That's when I came under the influence of Crawford Somerset... And so in around 1950 I started to get interested in children's participation in the learning process. But at the political level only through children being consulted and having class councils at school and those sorts of things like that... I think I was a pretty good classroom teacher. A lot of project work and a lot of collecting of stuff from around the town in the intermediate school. Kids had beats where they would go looking for particular information to embassies and they got to be very well known. Hooking them into the happenings overseas, meeting Gwen Somerset, who was the sister of Rewi Alley[17]. I wrote to Alley at the San Dan Bailey School and said my class would like to write to him and his children and so one of my first form classes started writing and we kept that going regularly for three years - they wrote and letters kept coming backwards and forwards.

Mature perspectives:

By the early 1960s, Hannah had made the switch from teaching Latin to teaching English. She had returned from her period of teaching in England and was teaching in one of the new girls' high schools which had, as outlined above, been established during the 1950s. There she experimented with a curriculum which encouraged student choice and was encouraged in this by an inspector. This gave her the confidence to persevere against those who

> thought you had an English book that started at page 1 and then you could tell what you do on page 56, and that sort of thing, which horrified me. But we had an inspector who came and I wrote a little school scheme. And he went and told [the headmistress] that it was spot on. And she said, "But it doesn't say anything". In other words it was all theory. Because by then I had the confidence in the theory - it was 1967 I think.

When Hannah attended a workshop in Auckland on new approaches to the teaching of English, she found support for her approach from leading authorities. One visiting speaker, an expert on linguistics, impressed her with his theory of 'register' - the idea that there was no one form of 'correct speech' and that different ways of speaking were appropriate in various social settings. The teaching of English must, in this view, address all forms of speech as socially constructed within specific contexts rather than reject students' 'ordinary language' as 'incorrect':

---

16 The Diploma in Education usually consists of six undergraduate courses in Education. It is available only to those who are university graduates, but who have not included Education as a subject in their degrees. It provides the equivalent of a major in education and is often used as a pre-requisite to masters studies in education for those whose original degrees were in other subjects.

17 Rewi Alley was a well-known New Zealander who devoted much of his life to the welfare of young people in China. He was criticised during the 1960s for being 'soft on communism.' He has been honoured by the Chinese Government for his services. He was the brother of Gwen Somerset, who was Crawford Somerset's wife and a founder of one of New Zealand's major early childhood organisations (G. Somerset, 1988) .

> I sat there amazed listening to him because it was pretty new to us, register and all that sort of thing. And somebody nudged me, and said, "You've got to do this." And so I went back and [my colleague] said, "You made it sound sensible." I said, "Did I?". I was terrified because it was so new. I remember I ended up saying, "Even I will probably be taking a tape recorder into a logging camp - and listening to the register of the people I find there." Which was a good conclusion.

In addition to her contacts with those who were writing about and developing the new approach to English teaching, Hannah was being influenced by the popular education paperbacks of the late 1960s -early 1970s - e.g. Postman and Weingartner's (1973) book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* . A well-known Wellington book-seller had fed her appetite for such progressive educational books:

> I went into Parsons [Roy Parsons' Books], and the elder Parsons was onto Penguin Education Specials. And I used to go in and ask if there were any new Penguin Specials, and he'd hand them out to me and sometimes discuss them. So it isn't teachers that taught me.... I'd never stopped to find out what a good teacher was before *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* with 'what is a good student? what is a good teacher?' - that sort of thing. Interesting.

Having a formal theoretical rationale which could be grounded in the educational literature gave Hannah confidence,.which was further fuelled by support from Russell Aitken, who was a secondary school inspector and later became the department of Education's curriculum officer who had responsibility for the drafting and writing and trialling of the mid-1970s new English Syllabus.

To develop, assert and resource her new approach, Hannah had to struggle against overt opposition from some colleagues. Furthermore, she faced resistance from some of her pupils, who expressed doubts about what was then a novel approach, since their expectations of a good English teacher required the teaching of formal grammar. Hannah had devised strategies to address such students' concerns:

> grammar. It's funny for a person with Greek and French and Latin - I enjoyed teaching grammar of course, it was whether there was any carry over. And so I wouldn't teach it to the kids and they said they wanted to know some, so I said, "All right, I'll have a grammar club in the lunch hour". So they came along, I suppose for a few weeks, and after a while they said, "Thankyou, that's all right, we know now what it's all about"... They wanted what their brothers got...I wanted to develop themes....My ideas were unusual... I didn't believe in teaching formal grammar except to use it because I knew that was one of the controversial things. That I was interested in kids improving their ability to think clearly and react - you know, all the figuring things - and that sort of thing.

Like Jack Shallcrass, Hannah Bell had become interested in actually *practising* democracy in school settings. She described how, in a co-educational school in the late 1960s-early 1970s she began getting her English classes to choose, by voting, the themes they would study. (The literature and language topics would centre for several weeks on the students' chosen theme):

> I could see that kids want to think and want to explore and that all the techniques and skills can be fitted in so easily following the kids and where they wanted to go. One day we were doing 'growing up' as a theme and we divided it up into several different topics. And they knew what order they wanted them in because we were practicing democracy, you see. So we voted, although I don't think it really mattered whether we had three or four. I usually had two piles going from what they wanted - putting things in as I found them. I picked up number four instead of number three. When I got there, I looked at the top one and said, "We're going to do so and so." A polite little boy put his hand up and said, "Oh, Miss Bell, we were going to do so and so." And they all looked at me - not nastily, but you could see there was something big going on in that room. And I said, "you're quite right." And of course, if I'd said, "Do you mind doing four now, because there's only two or three votes diffrent" they'd have done it. But I put four down and trotted down and got them three, And that was a big move forward for those kids, because I really did mean that they could choose and that it was not the teacher choosing.

Like Hannah, Margaret was also involved with the development of this new, and radical, English syllabus, and she explained the rationale behind what seemed to many critics to be an abandonment of 'structure' in the teaching of grammar, which was, she explained, replaced by

> A lot of written work and the very accurate marking and going over this with the kids in a positive environment individually. A great deal of time was spent on marking and on reading back and getting the kids to appreciate what they were saying in the written, what they wanted to say, and how best to do it....

The focus on 'register' rather than 'correctness' created a space for working with children whose backgrounds had not accorded them facility with the dominant language code (Keddie, 1973):

> Children who are disadvantaged in language development are disadvantaged because of poor parenting (going back to the informal), prior to going to school. So there is a huge gap in experiences. How can you begin by saying 'duck' is a noun and 'fed' is a past-tense verb?

The new approach was, she said, a product of its time - the 1960s and 1970s were a decade of rapid social and technological change:

> We looked at the whole of pop culture - where kids were at and looked at the way they developed language, how they learned and that's when we looked at the fact that we needed more than just reading and writing basic skills... We were doing it at [the girls' high school] anyway. It wasn't new to me at all. ..Language needed to be integrated in a holistic approach and using drama and using outside experiences and so forth... Really it began because of the exposure of young people to television and to the media and it was looking at language in a much wider context. ...it was a group of people who came together and who again, it was an inter-change of ideas, again, it was looking at the needs of young people because of the different pressures. I mean the pressure of advertising, the pressure of television, the pressures from the Maori moving from the rural into the urban area and just being without any kind of focus or roots. All those things impacted and came together. I think there were people who were truly educationalists and we just sparked each other off. There was a fellow in the

> Auckland Inspectorate called Jack Osborne and he was quite inspirational. Russell Aitken was in Wellington. I met them a lot.

Margaret saw this student-centred approach to language as a means of addressing what she had previously described as one of her central educational concerns - the remedying of disadvantage:

> I was actually more involved with language development for those students disadvantaged and whose language development was affected by their social situation... whereas people like Charmaine Pountney[18] were interested in the intellectual and the feminist movement there.

However, Margaret had decided that working with language alone could not break the cycle of disadvantage for her students and that additional sites of educational - and wider economic and political - activism would be necessary to achieve this. Her early experiments of working with the 'latch-key children' (described above) had taught her that education alone - that is, education without more fundamental and widespread political and economic change - cannot remove injustices in the social order: "We didn't ever break that cycle and that taught me that you needed more than just that to break the cycle [but] we certainly learned a great deal." The onset of the economic recession was generative of an unusual experiment at the school in an attempt to empower the students to become economically self-supporting:

> It was 1978 - round about then - when the first people were unable to be employed. It was about 3,000 I think and it was then at [the girls' high school] I brought some staff together and said "This is going to hit our kids and hit our community," and it was then that we developed really exciting curriculum.... We had a belief that when they first came in as third formers we must expose them to all sorts of exciting creative things and that those students who were going to be disadvantaged for employment we were going to give similar chances to and I rented a big chunk of land and a shop and we had amazing self-sufficiency. Our motto was to educate away from dependency. Our girls made things to a marketable standard and they sold them in the shop and - despite the fact that regulations said we couldn't - they kept the money. We tilled the land and they planted dried flowers and marketed those and parsley and marketed those and we worked the girls in small groups with tutors.

Despite an official ideology which was conducive to progressive educational ideas and projects, within the schools in which they taught, all three of those whose work is the object of this inquiry had at some time had to struggle against 'the authorities' in order fully to put into action a student - centred or progressive educational philosophy. Jack had encountered the SIS and the Special Branch during New Zealand's equivalent of the 'McCarthy Era'; Hannah had had to run her lunchtime 'grammar club' in order to reaasure her students that she was 'teaching properly', and

---

[18] A leading feminist educator who became Principal of Auckland Girls' Grammar School in the 1970s and Principal of Hamilton Teachers' College in the late 1980s.

Margaret had had to defy regulations in order to educate her girls for economic self-determination.

DISCUSSION

This paper has been a first attempt to work with small portions of three interview transcripts from a project which will include 150 interviews in total and which will culminate in the writing of a textbook in educational theory for use with student teachers. Like the project of which it is a samll part, it rests on the assumption that the process of educational theorising - of creating an educational theory - moves freely between the personal, the theoretical, and the political/ institutional dimensions of experience.[19] It therefore focusses on what C. Wright Mills (1959) and others have termed "Biography, history and social structure" as a basis for exploring relationships between individuals' educational life-histories, their historical and material contexts, and the broader patterns of power-relations which shape and constrain their possibilities, and which release the educational imaginations through which educational theories are created. I have introduced you to segments from interviews with three retired teachers all of whom have achieved eminence as 'progressive' educators. Where did their educational ideas come from? How did they come to choose and develop these approaches to educational theory and practice and to reject other approaches which were available to them? What light can these three narratives shed on our project's core questions and how can they be useful as a resource for teacher-educators in helping our student teachers to think about and generate their own educational theories?

In considering these three case studies in terms of "biography, history and social structure", I shall begin with history. Although there are age differences between the three teachers discussed, the early careers of all of them were substantially influenced by the progressive thinking which characterised and followed the 'Beeby era' of New Zealand's First Labour Government in the immediate post-World War Two years. At this time Jack Shallcrass (who entered Wellington Teachers' College after returning from military service) and Margaret Robertson (who attended Dunedin Teachers' College and Otago University upon leaving school) encountered what Margaret described as "inspirational teaching" by eminent progressive educators at primary teachers' colleges which were, as Jack Shallcrass expressed it, "strongly supportive" of the kinds of student-centred learning which was being encouraged by the Beeby administration. Each named mentors at these colleges: Walter Scott and Anton Vogt at Wellington Teachers' College in the 1940s and Crawford Somerset at Victoria University of Wellington in the 1950s (Jack Shallcrass); Jean

---

19 The theoretical discussion in this section is based on that in two of my previous publications (Middleton, 1993; 1995 in press).

Herbison at Dunedin Teachers' College (Margaret Robertson). Both institutions nurtured students' exposure to the liberal arts in ways which "inspired you to read" not only by exposing students to great literature, but also by means of the examples set by several of the lecturers - "the exposure to people of ideas, the exposure to people who were thinkers, the exposure to people who were interested." These teachers would agree with Maxine Greene (1988) that the cultivation of the imagination "liberated you really intellectually. And that's what learning is all about, I mean, it's liberating people." In addition to inspirational teaching within the colleges there was the chance to oberve in schools "wonderful teachers ... watching them and modelling yourself on them." As Jack Shallcrass expressed it," It was always clear to me that particular teachers can influence you - not necessarily by what they do, but also just simply by what they are." In these two institutions, as in the wider arena of educational policy of the time, Progressive ideas were 'in the air'; available and accessible.

The availability of 'progressive' influences and ideas continued after these teachers had completed their training. Both chose schools in which freedom of expression for students and staff was encouraged. For example, Margaret's first principal in the 1950s "encouraged any kind of experimentation." In the early 1970s Margaret attended courses in the new approaches to English and was encouraged by sympathetic inspectors and Education Department office holders such as John Osborne and Russell Aitken. Hannah Bell, who had not been to a teachers' college, had encountered Beeby's ideas through newspapers and educational publications and networks. Like Margaret, she mentioned inservice courses in the new approaches to English and being encouraged in her approach by Russell Aitken (who was a curriulum developer in the Department of Education). By the 1950s, Jack Shallcrass had returned to university to study education and had come under the influence of Crawford Somerset. Another source of information about new currents in educational thought had been through progressive booksellers and Hannah had mentioned her initiation into the neo-progressivism of the early 1970s as coming about through her reading of texts (e.g. Illich, 1971: Holt, 1974; Kohl, 1969; Postman and Weingartner, 1973) which had been recommended and supplied to her by Roy Parsons, a Wellington progressive book seller. (The commercial publication and distribution of particular forms of educational theory at particular times in and of itself is a fascinating line of inquiry for the sociology of educational knowledge - e.g. Apple, 1986). For all three of those studied, there was a continuing availability of theoretical resources - in the form of written texts and supportive individuals - throughout their careers.

Availability, however, is not enough. Not all of those who studied at Wellington or Dunedin Teachers Colleges at this time were enthused by progressivism. Our interviews include teachers who were confused by and rejecting of the progressive

climate. Not all of those who read the neo-progressive popular texts of the 1970s agreed with their points of view or emulated their practices. Not all of those who encountered the supporters of the new English syllabus agreed with its approach - our interviews contain many examples of this. What was it about these particular teachers which predisposed them towards progressive educational thought? As the three interviewees here have told us, maintaining and developing student-centred approaches was sometimes difficult and resisted by colleagues and students. What gave these three the determination to persevere, especially when the popular enthusiasm for progressivism began to decline?

To address this question, it is useful to consider each teacher's individual biography. All three of those here studied traced elements of their adult educational priorities and concerns to their own experiences as children and adolescents. The power dynamics of 'social structure' (especially, in these three case studies, social class) have structured these teachers' biographical experiences and the educational theories to which they have given rise. Despite economic hardships within at least two of the familes described, all three grew up in families in which reading, artistic expression, and educational achievement were valued and encouraged. In Bourdieu's terms, they acquired some 'cultural capital.' However, each also described a sense of marginality within their families, schools or communities which created the 'critical edge' from which they questioned aspects of the dominant educational order and propelled them towards change-oriented ideas and practices.

For example, her mother's experiences and philosophy combined with life in a church-influenced community had given Margaret "an exposure to a feeling towards those people who were disadvantaged." Her secondary schooling was 'rigidly streamed' in a ways which segregated those in the "top academic stream" from their "less academic" counterparts in a way which she "felt to be unfair." The student-centred theories she encountered at teachers' college and which were nurtured in the school in which she taught gave her the tools with which to construct the kinds of pedagogy which would produce the "opposite effect" from that of her own secondary schooling. There was an emotional underpinning, then, a "sense of injustice" which underscored or propelled Margaret's search for a theory which could help her to bring about change, to right wrongs in schools and in the wider society.

Similarly, Jack Shallcrass, who was to become the President of the Council for Civil liberties, described attempts to silence those whose teachings and whose passion for learning, debating and the arts, were providing him with "inspirational teaching." The theme of freedom of expression and how to create educational environments which could make this possible became dominant themes in his teaching, writing and

wider political activities. Hannah Bell's educational quest was to help her students to formulate, address and answer their own questions. Her youthful demeanour comes through in these interviews as what we would today call 'assertive.' The daughter of a bank manager in a provincial town, she was steerd by her mother towards being a debutante, but rejected this in favour of 'playing tennis' and organising school, and later university, sporting, cultural and social events. The "appalling confidence" she acquired enabled her to "become very good at what's called 'control'" as a prefect and later as a young teacher. As a teacher, her central concern was with the propensity of young people for asking questions - the student-centred theories she developed built into her students the right and ability to question.

These three case studies show how each teacher's theory builds onto a pre-existing educational, political or social concern or project. The more formalised educational theories gave expression and legitimacy to these deep-seated emotional committments. This suggests that if an educational theory (such as progressivism) is to 'take' with a particular teacher it must make sense of his or her own experience (as a student and/or as a teacher) and must create a sense of possibility for the kinds of educating which s/he sees as desirable (Greene, 1988; Middleton, 1993). The time, the form and the contexts in which educational ideas are encountered, then, are all important.

The approach taken in this project towards the teaching of educational theory to student teachers is very different from that which dominated the education disciplines at the time many of those of us who are today's teacher-educators were doing our post-graduate studies in educational theory. For example, in the mid-1970s, education degrees were like smorgasbords. A 'balanced diet' consisted of small helpings of each educational sub-discipline (psychology, philosophy, history, and sociology) and students were exposed to the various master narratives within these (behaviourism, phenomenology, etc). Somehow, it was reasoned, student teachers would 'make' their own educational theories from these ingredients. Making an educational theory was a matter of rational choice between competing alternatives.

When theoretical typologies or discipines are used as a basis for curriculum design, the students are positioned outside the theories. They are like spectators, looking in. Theory is presented as a map, as a chart drawn by those with the expertise to depict 'what is there' on the educational terrain. The international debates in educational theory appear to students as "abstracted from particular participants located in particular spatio-temporal settings" (Smith, 1987: 61). Theories appear as disembodied and decontextualised abstraction. As Madeleine Grumet has argued, "Theory is cultivated in the public world... Theory grows where it is planted, soaking

up the nutrients in the local soil, turning to the local light. A theory that is cultivated in the academy, the library, or the laboratory accommodates to its environment" (Grumet, 1988: 14). In teaching theory as somehow external to students - as consisting of the intellectual property of remote (and, for New Zealanders, usually overseas) academics - we alienate. Students are initiated into someone else's knowledge. They learn to write by stringing together someone else's lists of references, from someone else's sets of relevances.

Rather than presenting theories as a flat, or two-dimensional, map, we can study the ways in which - as teachers, as students, as social researchers and writers - we are positioned 'inside' the social andeducational phenomena which are the objects of our inquiries. The various educational theories are studied historically and sociologically, as knowledges which have been constructed by particular people in particular circumstances and which are variously, and unequally, related to the apparatusses of power (such as schools) in which we experience both possibilities and constraints. Such an approach enables us to explore relationships between the educational theories 'in the books' (academic texts and policy documents) and the ways individual teachers and others involved in education think and act in their everyday situations. Why do we 'like' or come to like certain theories and dislike others? What are the biographical affinities which form the basis of our choosing? And why are these personal and emotional affinities bracketed out of so many 'education' courses, majors, and degrees?

Our aim in the wider project of which this paper is one small part is to explore what happens when instead, as Janet Miller has described it, we base our curriculum on conceptualizations of the "teacher as researcher of her own underlying assumptions, as connected to her particular biographical, cultura;, and historical situations" (Miller, 1990: 17). We can use life-history accounts, such as those exemplified in this paper, as an aid to conceptualizing ouselves, our students, and those whose works we study as intellectuals "occupying specifiable locations in social space rather than as free-floating individuals" (Fraser, 1988: 108). We can approach the teaching and writing of educational theory as discourse (Foucault, 1980a; 1980b) - use techniques which make visible, and problematize, our own and others' positionings within the educational, historical, political, institutional and other social phenomena which are our objects of study. As teachers, writers and facilitators of educational theory, "whether the medium be linguistic or visual", we are, as Linda Hutcheon (1989: 143) has argued, "always dealing with systems of meaning operating within certain codes and conventions that are socially produced and historically constructed."

Life-history approaches are assuming increasing popularity in educational research and in teacher education (Casey, 1993; Goodson,1992; May, 1992; Middleton, 1993; Weiler, 1988; Witherell and Noddings, 1991). In our teaching and in our writing of educational theory they can help us to collapse - for ourselves as authors/teachers and for our students - the everyday and the theoretical dimensions of experience. For old dualisms such as 'public and private' sever theories from the lived realities at their base. Our educational theories do not come solely from other people's books, or from disembodied 'ideas', but are rooted in all dimensions of our experience.

References:

Apple, Michael (1986) *Teachers and texts.* New York: Routledge.

Beeby, C.E. (1992) *Biography of an idea.* Wellington: NZCER.

Beeby, C.E. (1986) Introduction to W. E. Renwick, *Moving targets.* Wellington: NZCER

Bourdieu, Pierre (1971) Intellectual field and creative project. IN: M.F.D. Young (ed) *Knowledge and Control.* London: Collier MacMillan.

Carter, Ian (1993) *Gadfly, the life and times of James Shelley,* Auckland University Press

Casey, Kathleen (1993) *I answer with my life: Life histories of women teachers working for social change.* New York: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel (1980a) *A history of sexuality, Vol 1.* New York: Vintage.

Foucault, Michel (1980b) *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977* (C. Gordan, trans) New York: Pantheon.

Fraser, Nancy (1989) *Unruly practices: Power, discourse and gender in contemporary social theory.* Minneapolis: University of minnesota Press.

Freire, Paolo (1971) *Pedagogy of the oppressed* Harmondsworth: Penguin..

Goodson, Ivor (ed) (1992) *Studying teachers' lives.* London: Routledge

Greene, Maxine (1988) *Dialectic of freedom.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Grey, Lex (1975) *Learning Through Play,* Wellington, NZ Playcentre Association Inc

Grumet, Madeleine (1988) *Bitter milk: Women and teaching.* Amherst: University of Massachussetts press.

Holt, John (1974) *How children fail.* Harmondsworth: Penguin

Hutcheon, Linda (1989) *The politics of postmodernism.* New York: Routledge.

Illich, Ivan (1971) *Deschooling society.* Harmondsworth: Penguin

Keddie, Nel (1973) *Tinker, tailor - the myth of cultural deprivation.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

McGeorge, C (1981) Race and the Maori in the New Zealand school curriculum since 1877. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of History,* 10, pp 13 - 23.

McLaren, Ian (1973) *Education for a small democracy: New Zealand.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

May, Helen (1992a) *Minding Children: Managing Men: Conflict and Compromise in the Lives of Postwar Pakeha Women* Bridget Williams Ltd

May, Helen (1992b) Women and Progressive Education 1920's-1950's in S. Middleton and A. Jones (eds). *Women and Education in Aotearoa* , Vol 2. Wellington: Bridget Williams

Middleton, Sue. (1990a) American influences in the sociology of N.Z. education 1944-1988. In D. Philips; G.Lealand, and G. McDonald (Eds), *The Impact of American*

Ideas on New Zealand's Educational Policy, Practice and Thinking Wellington: N.Z.-U.S. Educational Foundation/N.Z. Council for Educational Research, pp 50-69

Middleton, Sue (1993) *Educating feminists - Life-histories and pedagogy.* New York: Teachers' College Press.

Middleton, Sue (in press) Doing feminist educational theory - A postmodernist perspective. IN: *Gender and Education*, Vol 7, No 1.

Middleton, Sue and May, Helen (1994) *Through teachers' eyes: Towards an oral history of educational ideas in New Zealand.* Paper presented to the annual conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, December 1-4.

Miller, Janet (1990) *Creating spaces and finding voices: Teachers collaborating for empowerment.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Mills, C. Wright (1959) *The sociological imagination.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Moss, L.C.I. (1990b) American influences in NZ education 1840-1945 In D. Philips; G.Lealand, and G. McDonald (Eds), *The Impact of American Ideas on New Zealand's Educational Policy, Practice and Thinking* Wellington: N.Z.-U.S. Educational Foundation/N.Z. Council for Educational Research.

Postman, N. and Weingartner, C. (1971) *Teaching as a subversive activity.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Renwick, W. (1986) *Moving targets.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Shuker, Roy (1987) *The one best system? A revisionist history of state schooling in New Zealand.* Palmerston North: Dunmore.

Smith, Dorothy (1987) *The everyday world as problematic.* Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Somerset, Gwen (1988) *Sunshine and Shadow.* Wellington, NZ Playcentre Federation.

Somerset, H.C.D. (1973) *Littledene.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.(Originally published in 1938)

Walkerdine, Valerie (1984) Developmental psychology and the child-centred pedagogy: The insertion of Piaget into early childhood education. In J. Henriques et al (eds) *Changing the subject.* London: Methuen.

Weiler, Kathleen (1988) *Women teaching for change: Gender, class and power.* New York: Bergin and Garvey.

Witherell, C. and Noddings, N. (eds) (1991) *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education.* New York: Teachers College Press.